

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
FRB-03 INR-10 NSAE-00 ICA-11 TRSE-00 XMB-02
OPIC-03 SP-02 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 NSC-05 SS-15
STR-07 CEA-01 INT-05 DOE-15 SOE-02 /121 W
-----088392 130822Z /12

R 120929Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0403
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY RABAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 2682

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EMIN, ELTN, MR
SUBJECT: CONTINUING IRON ORE TRANSPORTATION DIFFICULTIES

REF: A) NOUAKCHOTT A-019 (B) NOUAKCHOTT 1614 (C) NOUAKCHOTT 1253
D) NOUAKCHOTT 2421 (E) NOUAKCHOTT 2554

1. FIGURES FOR IRON ORE TRANSPORTED BY RAIL FROM ZOUERATE TO NOUADHIBOU IN LAST WEEK OF AUGUST INDICATE ANOTHER POOR WEEK DESPITE THE CESSATION OF POLISARIO ATTEMPTS TO DISRUPT THE RAILWAY. 96,000 TONS WERE DELIVERED, FAR SHORT OF THE 165,000 WEEKLY AVERAGE ESTIMATED NEEDED FOR THE REMAINDER OF YEAR EVEN TO ATTAIN REVISED GOAL OF 7.5 MILLION TONS FOR 1978. FYI: PREVIOUS SNIM PREDICTIONS OF 8.5 MILLION TONS ARE NO LONGER MENTIONED
END FYI.

2. FOLLOWING TWO DISASTROUSLY LOW WEEKS END OF JUNE, PRODUCTION SEEMED TO BE BACK IN STRIDE FOLLOWING COUP AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF CEASE FIRE. WEEK OF JULY 16-22 SAW SHIPMENTS OF 195,000 TONS, HIGHEST WEEK OF ENTIRE YEAR. TWO WEEKS LATER, HOWEVER AND IN ABSENCE OF ANY POLISARIO ACTIVITY, ORE SHIPMENTS FELL
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BACK TO 69,000, INDICATING CONTINUING PROBLEMS.

3. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL: ACCORDING TO EXTREMELY RELIABLE SOURCE, SNIM DIRECTOR-GENERAL ISMAIL OULD AMAR HAS ADMITTED THAT DELIVERIES DURING CEASE-FIRE PERIOD HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY HAMPERED BY MAINTENANCE PROBLEMS. EXPATRIATES ARE REPORTEDLY NO LONGER WORKING ON MAINTENANCE OF THE TRACK,

AND ATTEMPTS TO SEND MORE HEAVILY-LOADED CARS TO MAKE UP EARLIER DEFICITS HAVE LED TO DERAILMENTS. ANOTHER RELIABLE SOURCE REPORTS THAT A DERAILMENT LAST WEEK SEVEN KILOMETERS NORTH OF NOUADHIBOU CAUSED EXTENSIVE DAMAGE QUOTE FAR WORSE THAN ANYTHING THE POLISARIO COULD INFLICT END QUOTE. STILL ANOTHER SOURCE HAS REPORTED THAT NUMBER OF OPERATIVE LOCOMOTIVES HAS NOW BEEN REDUCED TO EIGHT, WHICH WOULD BE THE MINIMUM NECESSARY FOR NORMAL OPERATION OF TWO TRAINS DAILY.

4. BEGIN COMMENT: TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS ARE OCCURRING AT UNFORTUNATE TIME FOR DIRECTOR-GENERAL AMAR. SNIM HAS ANNOUNCED SPECIAL SHAREHOLDERS MEETING SEPTEMBER 19 AT WHICH TIME STATUTES OF SNIM-SEM (NEW ACRONYM SIGNIFYING MIXED ECONOMY CORPORATION) WILL BE APPROVED AND ADMINISTRATORS DESIGNATED. WE HAVE LEARNED THAT THERE IS MOVEMENT UNDERWAY IN MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND MINES TO OUST AMAR, WHO IS PERCEIVED AS TOO POWERFUL, ARROGANT AND SPENDTHRIFT. DESPITE HIS GENERALLY RECOGNIZED MANAGERIAL ABILITY, MINOR CRITICISMS OF SNIM MANAGEMENT, E.G. USE OF FIRST-CLASS TRAVEL FOR ALL EXECUTIVES, IMPORTATION OF EXPENSIVE FRENCH FOOD INTO ZOUERATE ETC. ARE OFTEN VOICED, AND THE CONJUNCTURE OF TRANSPORTATION DIFFICULTIES WITH FIRST PUBLIC STOCKHOLDERS MEETING MAY AFFORD AMAR'S OPPONENTS WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO SURFACE THEIR DISCONTENT. END COMMENT.
END CONFIDENTIAL. KRYZA
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